



Licensed to Learn 2012-2013 Impact Report

Licensed to Learn (L2L) is an Ontario-based charitable organization dedicated to empowering children and youth to reach their academic potential through free, peer-led tutoring. We train and certify student tutors in elementary and secondary schools. These students go on to provide academic assistance to students who are academically at risk, or new to the English language.

Measuring the impact of our program is an important part of what we do. Input from students participating in L2L helps us to evaluate the work we do, and to continually improve. In partnership with the Research Department at the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), we collected survey data at participating schools in Toronto in the 2012-2013 school year. Surveys were completed by Tutors participating in L2L on 4 occasions throughout the program. The following report summarizes the key findings from these surveys, and highlights important areas for investigation in the 2013/2014 school year.

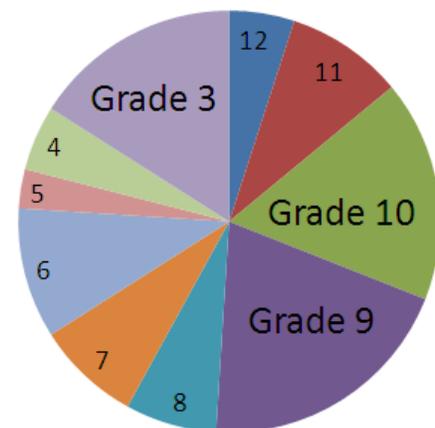
Participating Schools

In the 2012-2013 school year, a total of 18 elementary and 12 secondary schools participated in L2L programming, with 628 students trained as tutors and 667 students receiving tutoring. With each of these students receiving at least 15 one-on-one personalized tutoring sessions, we delivered over 10,000 hours of free academic support.¹ Data relating to approximately 400 students receiving tutoring through the L2L program was analyzed for this report.

The Peers

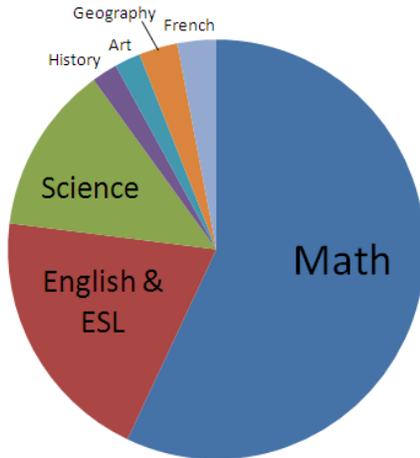
Peers are students receiving tutoring through L2L. The majority of the Peers were female (62%), while 38% were male. The distribution of participating Peers' grades demonstrates a trend in L2L schools to focus programming on the lower grades of the elementary and secondary panels. The youngest Peers recorded, and those making up the largest group at the elementary level (16%), were in grade 3. From our correspondence with participating schools we believe that this is a result of many schools using L2L as part of their strategy to help grade 3 students prepare for the EQAO (Education Quality and Accountability Office) assessment. The largest groups of Peers at the secondary level were in grade 9 and grade 10 (20% and 17%, respectively).

Figure 1: Peer Grade Distribution



¹ These numbers reflect a decrease in the expected participation in our program due to a withdrawal of service in the TDSB that affected all extracurricular programming.

Figure 2: Subjects of Tutoring



At the grade 9 level, this could be evidence of a strategy to prepare grade 9's for their EQAO math assessment, or it could be evidence of a strategy for younger high school students to be supported socially and academically by older students at the school.

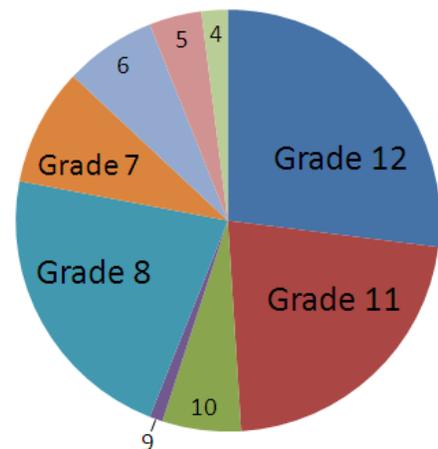
The majority of students surveyed received tutoring in Math (57%). English, and English as a Second Language (ESL), and Science were also heavily represented (20% and 13%), with tutoring in other subjects represented less frequently.

Tutors were asked to describe the difference they felt they were making for their Peers. The majority of responses (38%) reflected a focus on gains through improved subject comprehension and academic achievement. Another major theme was the development of positive learning habits and strategies (24%). Students also discussed improved attitudes (20%) and self-confidence (18%) as a result of tutoring in the program.

The Tutors

Over 400 of the 628 Tutors participated in the surveys (64%). Participants ranged from grade 4 to grade 12 students. Similar to the gender distribution of the Peers, 67% of the Tutors were female and 33% were male.

Figure 3: Tutor Grade Distribution



At the beginning of their engagement with L2L, Tutors were asked about their primary motivation for joining the program. The responses can be broadly categorized by benefits to the Peer receiving tutoring, and benefits to the Tutor themselves:

- Approximately 60% of respondents mentioned “helping” in their response. Tutors reported wanting to share their knowledge for the benefit of a Peer, build confidence in another student, and help someone to overcome challenges.
- 40% of respondents reported that their motivation related to some personal benefit they felt they would derive from participating in the program. Examples include seeing L2L as an opportunity to: build leadership skills; log volunteer hours; add experience to their resume; enhance their own academic performance in the areas of tutoring; and to have fun.

Perceived outcomes for Tutors as a result of participating in the program were surveyed at the end of their engagement, with overwhelmingly positive responses:

- 81% of Tutors agreed or strongly agreed that they made new friends
- 95% of Tutors agreed or strongly agreed that they had learned to tutor effectively through L2L training
- 96% of Tutors agreed or strongly agreed that they had a good experience

In reflecting on their experience in the program, Tutors were asked what they enjoyed most, what they found most challenging, and what they had learned from their experience. 56% reported that they most enjoyed helping another student, and described the rewarding feelings associated with seeing progress among their Peer. This finding is consistent with reported Tutor motivation for participating, as noted above. 26% expressed that the relationships they had formed with their Peers was the most enjoyable component of the program; and 18% described their enjoyment of learning useful new skills, such as leadership, communication, listening skills, and organizational skills.

Reported challenges associated with tutoring included: a lack of motivation on the part of their Peer for succeeding in school (34%) and general poor attitudes on behalf of their Peer (25%). Other challenges related to external factors were expressed: 15% of Tutors described competing priorities that made it challenging to meet regularly with their Peers, and 10% expressed that they felt they would have liked more time to help their Peer.

The majority of Tutors (69%) described the development of soft skills like listening, patience, and leadership as their main take-away from participating in L2L, with 17% of these students describing the development of empathy, specifically. 26% discussed discovering how different people learn, and practicing strategies for helping people with varying learning abilities and styles, which is a key component of L2L's Tutor Training Curriculum. Finally, 5% of students reported that they felt the area in which they learned most was the academic subject of their tutoring. For example, Tutors providing assistance in math felt that they had further developed their own math knowledge and skills as a result of helping another student in this subject.

Conclusion

Everyone who participated in L2L's Toronto programming in the 2012-2013 school year should be extremely proud of their efforts. The nature of the relationships between Tutors and Peers, and the benefits reported by all those involved are very encouraging, and drive us forward as an organization to serve more students in more schools.

Programming will continue into the 2013-2014 school year, with an increased focus on evaluative efforts. An important direction for L2L's future data collection will be to approach Peers directly to measure L2L's impact on their performance and experience in school.

Acknowledgements

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